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Topic # 1

Teachers' collaborative narratives to the construction of professional knowledge⁵⁸

Deolinda Ribeiro ribeirodeo@ese.ipp.pt,
High School of Education - Polytechnic School of Oporto, Portugal

Based on my experience as teacher educator and supervisor of professional practice, I will present an approach to the construction of professional knowledge via reflective collaborative writing, in pre-service kindergarten education of kindergarten that uses reflective collaborative supervision journals as a teacher development strategy. Using journals as reflective narratives on experience aims at amplifying educational knowledge, for it includes the development of collaborative indagatory strategies. The collaborative dimension aims at fostering social and professional critical awareness, thus increasing the possibilities of participated and co-constructed teacher development processes to occur.

I will describe one case study on initial kindergarten teacher education in order to illustrate the development value of this collaborative journal, by characterizing the different dimensions of the construction of educational knowledge that emerge from the student teachers' writings.

Purpose of the collaborative supervision journal

The collaborative supervision journals, written between the student teacher(s), the cooperating teacher and the institutional supervisor, favour a reflective and indagatory approach to professional action. Writing a collaborative journal on supervisory processes allows the participants to deepen their understanding of vicarious experience and of the process of knowledge production in professional contexts, for it involves writing about feelings and emotions, as well as about thoughts and actions. It allows teachers to dive into the complexities of practice, describe it, confront their perceptions with others' and construct their theories of practice.

Using collaborative supervision journals presupposes systematic assessment in the regulation of the learning process, so that problems and solutions, potentialities and constraints may be identified. Only then are we in a position to validate its benefits as a teacher development strategy on the road to certification and professional autonomy. Understanding assessment as regulation of the learning processes includes the self-assessment of attitudes, representations, knowledge and beliefs of the student teachers themselves (Ribeiro, 2006a). When self-assessment is undertaken in a context where everybody contributes to the intentional transformation of educational experiences by co-constructing knowledge, that is, via a dialogic process, the possibilities of success in the development of teacher autonomy will most likely be enhanced.

In my case study, student teachers' knowing-in-action is built on basis of the confrontation of different perspectives on the educational process, involving kindergarten teachers and small children. My main motivation for this study comes from my need to improve teacher education practices, along with a growing awareness of the need to foster teacher development strategies that have the potential of transforming pedagogical practice through critical and dialogic reflection. My aim is to study the role cooperating teachers, institutional

⁵⁸ This text comes from a research/ teacher development project funded by the Centre of Research in Education of the Institute of Education and Psychology at the University of Minho (Research Line - Higher Education: images and practices). It was partly based on Moreira & Ribeiro (forthcoming).

supervisors and student teachers have in the co-construction of pedagogical knowledge, through reflective dialogue on the participants' perspectives on educational situations. This orientation is associated with the intention of creating teacher and supervisor development situations that will allow (prospective) teachers to co-construct their professional knowledge in cooperation with significant others (pairs and supervisors).

Context and methodology of the collaborative supervision journal

The case study was developed in an undergraduation context. It took place in the teaching practice year of 6 student teachers, all female, in the High School of Education of the Polytechnic School of Oporto, in the school year of 2006/2007. In this course programme, the teaching practice year takes place in the 4th year of an undergraduate degree on Kindergarten Teaching, in one kindergarten school selected by student teachers. They are grouped in pairs and are supervised by one experienced kindergarten teacher - the cooperating teacher - and by a teacher from the School of Education – the institutional supervisor. So, the triad composed by each student teacher, the kindergarten teacher and the higher education teacher is called *teacher development triad*. As the institutional supervisor, I had been developing, for some years now, a reflective approach to initial teacher education that integrates action research, class observation, and written reflection (Ribeiro, 2006b). More recently, I started using the collaborative journal as a narrative of practice built in collaboration with pairs and with the cooperating teacher (Ribeiro & Moreira, 2007; Ribeiro, Claro & Nunes, 2007).

The aims of the development of the collaborative supervision journal are:

- To understand the complexities of practice through the development of dialogic writing among the student teachers and the supervisors.
- To enhance the opportunities for the construction of professional practice knowledge through the confrontation of the perceptions, knowledge and values of the each participant in the teacher development context.
- To understand the meaning that each participant attributes to the others' action, the way they think and interpret the educational experiences through the practice of written reflection.
- To develop strategies of critical and dialogic reflection about practices that improves the co-construction of the professional knowledge and the quality of kindergarten education.

As a reflective dialogical narrative or dialogue journal, the first entry is made by the student teacher themselves. Their entry is divided into three parts: one for each of the student teachers and another for the cooperating teacher. Entries are recorded twice a month and are about a pedagogical activity developed by a student teacher. The writing process is as follows: the student teacher who observes the activity developed by her colleague writes an interpretative commentary on it, integrating the teacher's interaction with the children and the children's behaviour during the pedagogical game⁵⁹. Afterwards the observed student teacher reacts to her colleague's commentary and builds her own. Finally, the cooperating teacher registers her opinion, both on the pedagogical situation and on the student teachers' interpretations.

⁵⁹ 'Pedagogical Game' is the characteristic activity of kindergarten school children in Portugal. Kindergarten school is the first stage of the Portuguese Educational System, being compulsory education comprised by late kindergarten, primary and lower secondary education.

I, as the institutional supervisor, provide feedback on the writing and raise issues for reflection, questioning the situation being described. I register my comments in the same journal on the side. These comments are later clarified in the supervisory meetings with the whole triad. Written reflection does not substitute weekly oral reflection with the teaching groups, focussed on the analysis of children's and student teachers' learning processes, as well as on planning future action. Interacting with the text produced by the triad aims at deepening the student teachers' critical reflectivity and, thus, to develop their professional knowledge, based upon on the practices they observe and implement.

The case study presented in this text took place in the school year of 2006/07. It is constituted by two student teachers, the cooperating teacher and myself, as the institutional school supervisor. The two student teachers were regular students. LS was 22 years old and had a part-time job. LC was 23 and was a whole-time student. The kindergarten school where they were placed was a private institution, partly financed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. It was placed in a semi-urban environment, near Oporto.

The impact of collaborative supervision journals in the development of professional knowledge

In order to highlight the impact of collaborative journals on the construction of student teachers' practical knowledge (Clandinni & Connelly, 1996), the analysis of some journal entries will be undertaken⁶⁰. The two examples below aim at illustrating the writing process and the type of feedback that was provided.

The student teachers' perceptions give evidence to the role the collaborative journal plays in the development of observational skills, reflection on practice, and future action. Knowledge is shared, assuming all participants that each perspective is relevant for the reconstruction of action strategies that take the children as the starting point and main focus for reflection. The role of the cooperating teacher is stimulating to the student teacher, as she reinforces the student teacher's self-esteem, by viewing failures as opportunities for personal and professional growth.

<i>Entry by the observer student teacher</i>	<i>Commentary by the observed student teacher</i>	<i>Commentary by the kindergarten/ cooperating teacher</i>
Children used a paper sheet shaped as butterfly wings. With this paper shape we also intended that the group would develop the concept of space (...) children were delighted with the material (painted wood) because they had never explored it. The activity went very well. the children were integrated, which pleased us, for it is a sign that the group is achieving some of the aims we devised for this week (...) ⁶⁰ . [JS, November 2006]	As children were spreading glue, adults were accompanying each one, interacting, asking questions and exemplifying different ways of using the material (...) I agree with JS when she says that this group's reaction motivates us to have them experiment with new materials, as their enthusiasm and participation is complete, judging from their faces and bodies (...) even though the entire activity was reflected upon and planned, and the materials were at the children's disposal, we did not predict (...) that they wouldn't work (...) however, I believe that it is a lesson to be taken in future situations: to know in depth the materials' properties before using them (...). [LC, November 2006]	Children should have had the opportunity to use and experiment with all the material before gluing it; therefore, I think it was positive the fact that the first experience failed, which allowed us the opportunity to change the situation for the second group of children (...). [SC, November 2006]

⁶⁰ All testimonials in this text were translated from the Portuguese.

Their writing reveals a growing acceptance of divergent thought. Their professional knowing-in-action evolves through the confrontation of different points of view on educational action that acquires different meanings as student teachers' awareness on practice emerges and is subjected to scrutiny by all participants. In this process, the student teachers' personal and professional knowledge is influenced by confrontation and dialogue among all actors involved, being dissent viewed as a benefit in one's own development.

<i>Entry by the observer student teacher</i>	<i>Commentary by the observed student teacher</i>	<i>Commentary by the kindergarten/ cooperating teacher</i>
The 'colour domino', as the name states, is a game that allows trying out the colours (...) when conducting the activity, I believe that JS could have associated the colours to objects in the room, or even to children's clothes (...) at the end of the game, JS made a valuable proposal to the group in terms of their development (...) I believe that it was very useful her request for help in putting the materials away, so that children may start to regard storing didactic resources as making part of the activity itself (...) with the intent of increasing the development of their management skills and responsibility attitudes towards the room's didactic resources and games that belong to all [LC, March 2007]	As the children were naming the colours, I was watching some children that were having more difficulties in expressing themselves in this activity (...) The association was based in previous learning (...) therefore, one of the children made an immediate association of yellow to the sun. So, I think differently from LC (...) However, I agree when she says that I could have used more concrete examples, using the colours of some objects in the room, as children interact with them and express themselves with them. My attention to each child and to what s/he already knew was something I cared about, as the kindergarten teacher is the game's mediator and seeks to be as attentive to the child's difficulties as possible. [JS, March 2007]	In spite of the fact that the activity was performed in the large group, I believe that JS was paying attention to each child, knowing how to manage the group so that all children could give their contribution. JS listened to all children and valued their participation, thus developing their well-being and their self-esteem (...) it was important that JS asked the children for help in choosing the location for storing the game (...) through cooperation. JS provided the children with the possibility to collaborate in the learning process. [SC, March 2007]

As the end of the teaching practice year was getting close, I sought to identify the student teachers' perceptions on the role of the collaborative supervision journal in their professional development process. Therefore I asked them to write about the meaning they attributed to this strategy and to reflect upon it. The analysis of their texts revealed that the development of observation competences, the development of personal professional knowledge through dialogue and confrontation of perspectives, the importance of safe supportive help and stimulus by supervisors, the development of attitudes of inquiry and openness to the other, and finally, the construction of emancipatory practical knowledge through collaboration were paramount in the process of growth as kindergarten teachers. The results of the analysis are shown below.

Development of observation competences

Observation comes as a first step to reflection on practice, as they refer to it as a basis for the critical analysis and for the written confrontation of perspectives.

"(...) a careful and attentive observation is the most important ingredient in the construction of a journal. In it our reflection, our critical analysis and our confrontation of opinion are sustained."
[LC, April 2007]

"Being observed during an activity does not make me nervous because I feel at ease with the educational team and I believe that all moments of pedagogical practice may and should be observed." [JS, April 2007]

Development of personal professional knowledge through dialogue and confrontation of perspectives

Dialogue and confrontation of perspectives and perceptions on practice, under the form of writing, appear to have been facilitated by the development of verbal and systematic reflective habits among the triad. By exposing knowledge (and the lack of it), student teachers find an opportunity to (re)define children's learning strategies and to (re)construct their own professional development processes.

"Sharing one's critical reflection enriches our work and often the triad's thinking (...) For example, JL questioned me [after an activity] about the reason I changed my seating place, saying that this change represented a disadvantage in the arrangement of the activity. I explained that this need had been a result of my reflection in action, once I was not seeing well all children and vice-versa. This reflection raised another one, regarding the organization of space. Even though this dialogue, in this stage, did not involve the cooperating teacher (...) it is an example of the confrontation of perspectives usually present in the construction of the collaborative journal (...) my ideas are confronted with two other people's and, not seldom, they disagree. (...) building the journal has favoured not only the development of my ability to do things, but also of my knowing how to be and to act." [LC, April 2007]

"The collaborative journal involves moments of reflection and of professional transformation, as we may question pedagogical action and suggest strategies to improve other activities (...) to take advantage of and to respect our colleague's and the cooperating teacher's opinions is an important aspect of every student teacher's professional development (...) Being different from the other is advantageous (...) confrontation and debate of ideas facilitates understanding and the transformation of our personal and professional development processes." [JS, April 2007]

Importance of safe help and stimulus by supervisors

The student teachers' perceptions point out the importance of the supervisory role (of the cooperating teacher and the institutional supervisor) in the interactive discourse built by the journal. Reflective dialogue offers possibilities to revise action and to improve in a supporting environment.

"Having a situation commented by the cooperating teacher gives us a more safe and stimulating vision to learn and to improve our actions. Our cooperating teacher is evaluative and critical; she always seeks to focus on the most relevant aspects of our commentaries, gives suggestions, expresses her personal opinion and always objectifies the group's feelings [children's] that were observed in the activity." [LC, April 2007]

"(...) a reflective dialogue is also established with the institutional supervisor who confronts us with her perspective on what she read in our diary (...) she suggests improvements and raises new interpretations on the entry. This enlarged vision does not finish our practice moment, but helps us to reflect together and to notice the diversity of readings that our actions may have. This problematization of an activity already commented on by the development triad opens new horizons towards an innovative and evaluative vision of the real objectives of our action." [JS, April 2007]

"In this strategy the support of the institutional supervisor is implicit, as she gave suggestions and shared experiences, demonstrating her understanding and respect for our role as student teachers and as future educational professionals." [LC, July 2007]

The development of attitudes of inquiry and openness to the Other

The diversity of views on the same situation (but with common goals) is perceived as a precondition for the transformation of thought and action, a strong indicator of the construction of personal professional knowledge.

"Building a journal is an important strategy for our evaluation as student teachers (...) it helps in the enquiry and introspection on our educational acts and its confrontation with different perspectives (...) we discover and establish new goals for our development, we try to re-create and to value the educational act and to enrich it." [JS, April 2007]

"The journal favours a deeper knowledge of the other, which is a great benefit (...) this knowledge is a valuable contribution to our team work and to our own action, both in the sense that we work towards the same goals and as we realize the other needs help or, on the contrary, greater autonomy." [LC, April 2007]

The construction of emancipatory practical knowledge through collaboration

The consequences of collaborative reflection are viewed as influencing the development of more profound practical knowledge. As a result, pedagogical action is more secure and confident in one's own skills and knowledge.

"Our reflections on the collaborative journal make us reflect on the practical implications of our action. This has proven to be an advantage in the improvement of our pedagogical action in several ways. The difficulties we felt in the beginning were overcome, and our work is done with the same effort but with greater ease and with more knowledge and confidence (...) the development of competences of observation, reflection and critical analysis, argumentation, acceptance of the other, and transformation of reality are a real proof of the role of the collaborative journal." [LC, April 2007]

"Building knowledge through the diversity of opinion is important in our professional development (...) I seek to integrate and to improve my scientific groundings and my colleague seeks a more pragmatic approach. We exchange opinions and knowledge, which turn out to be very positive and always open to improvement." [JS, April 2007]

"If we have in mind that the personal and social development encompasses learning about cooperation, living in democracy, listening to the other and develop critical reflection, then I consider that writing the collaborative journals allowed us to grow at an outstanding level." [JS, Julio 2007]

Conclusions

The student teachers' perceptions point out the importance of the collaborative written dynamics that was created in the promotion of *cooperation and of democratic practices* within the formative process. Furthermore, they stress the importance of this strategy in the development of their critical reflection, viewing reflection on practice as an inquiry exercise that allows for self-assessment of professional development processes, including the development of

observation skills, the re-organization of development goals and the improvement of educational practice. Collaborative reflection is perceived as a strategy that facilitates knowledge construction about the other, by promoting openness to and from others, favouring interaction that is adjusted to personal needs, and facilitating the development of significant action for the actors involved.

Collaborative supervision journals also favour *polyvocality and respect for diversity*, for they involve participants into listening to different voices, including those from the children, from the student teachers, from cooperating teachers, and from institutional supervisor. I regard these attitudes as being crucial within a multicultural and critical reflective approach to kindergarten teacher development.

The collaborative journals were also viewed as a strategy that promotes a *higher balance at the level of the roles of each of the actors involved as well as tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity*. The student teachers consider that the collaborative nature of this strategy promotes the understanding and respect for their role as future professionals of education on the part of the institutional supervisor, but also on the part of the cooperating teacher. As it favours the co-construction of professional knowledge that is built in the crossroads of different knowledge, perceptions, attitudes, and ways of being and being with others, student teachers learn to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity which is also part of the teachers' professional lives.

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Symposium: Teachers' narratives of professional experience: Building a culture of collaborative inquiry

**First Authors:
Maria Alfredo Moreira
Deolinda Ribeiro
Maria do Céu Melo**

This symposium aims at presenting three case studies of teachers' narratives of professional practice, undertaken within contexts of initial and specialized teacher education. Based on our experience as teacher educators and supervisors of professional practice, we present an approach to the development of professional autonomy through the use of teachers' journals that promote collaborative inquiry. These journals were undertaken in two different contexts: pre-service education of kindergarten teachers and post-graduate education of foreign language/ history teachers.

The use of journals as reflective narratives of experience aims at promoting inquiry into professional practice by integrating teaching and research, individual reflection and cooperation. The authors present the rationale, development, and results of the three case studies, as well as discuss the potential and constraints of this inquiry-oriented and collaborative approach to teacher development.

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Topic # 1

Issues of voice in teachers' collaborative journals⁵⁶

Maria Alfredo Moreira malfredo@iep.uminho.pt, University of Minho, Portugal

This paper is integrated in a symposium on teachers' narratives of professional experience. It describes an experience undertaken with experienced teachers undertaking a course on Evaluation in Pedagogical Supervision in a Master's programme at the University of Minho. The use of collaborative journals as reflective narratives of experience aims at promoting inquiry into professional practice by integrating teaching and research, individual reflection and cooperation, within a critical reflective approach to teaching and learning. In this process, the issue of teachers' and learners' voice and related issues of teacher and learner power are crucial in understanding the process of knowledge construction.

"[T]o exclude the unique individual as a matter of methodological principle is disturbingly analogous to the suppression of dissent in a totalitarian society."

(Friedrich, 1989, in Waite, 1995: 71)

⁵⁶This text comes from a research/ teacher development project funded by the Centre of Research in Education of the Institute of Education and Psychology at the University of Minho (Research Line - Higher Education: images and practices).

Collaborative journals and the construction of personal practical knowledge

My work as a teacher educator in pre-service, in-service and specialized teacher education contexts has been directed towards articulating a critical reflective approach to teaching and learning with the promotion of teacher and learner autonomy. Jiménez Raya, Lamb and Vieira (2007:1) define learner and teacher autonomy as “*the competence to develop as a self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware participant in (and beyond) educational environments, within a vision of education as (inter)personal empowerment and social transformation*”. Empowerment, in the context of this experience, takes the meaning of “*a critical-democratic pedagogy for self and social change (...) It approaches individual growth as an active, cooperative, and social process, because the self and society create each other.*” (Shor, 1992: 15).

Using collaborative or dialogue journals in teacher education is based on the assumption that teachers possess a valuable amount of professional knowledge, encapsulated as ‘practical theories of practice’, defined as “*a person’s private, integrated but ever-changing system of knowledge, experience and values which is relevant to teaching practice at any particular time*” (Handal & Lauvås, 1987: 9). These theories need to be made visible to others, so they can be negotiated and subjected to refinement and elaboration. When teachers write, they disclose what is most valuable and significant to them – they engage in an inquiry-oriented, critical reflective process. In this way, they engage in a process of systematic regulation of the teaching and learning process, as well as in the regulation of the teacher education processes that is provided by the writing context. Being their writings subjected to the written comment of other teachers, problems and solutions, potentialities and constraints to the professional action emerge, as well as new concerns and venues for action and reflection.

In this process, the role of the teacher educator as the facilitator of self-supervision processes takes place as I strive to promote professional self/co-development strategies that engage teachers in the (re)construction of pedagogical knowledge. The inquiry-oriented, collaborative, and dialogic approach fostered by these journals involves participants in a process of (re)elaboration of their personal practical knowledge, as *knowledge that reflects the individual’s prior knowledge and acknowledges the contextual nature of that teacher’s knowledge* (Clandinin, 1992: 125). It is knowledge in action that

“...can be discovered in both the actions of the person and under some circumstances by discourse or conversation. What we do mean by ‘personal’ as defining knowledge is that the knowledge so defined participates in, is imbued with, all that goes to make up a person. That is, it is not such “impersonal” knowledge, as two times two equals four. It is, rather, a knowledge which has arisen from circumstances, actions, and undergoings which themselves had affective content for the person in question. (...)What we do mean by knowledge is that body of convictions and meanings, conscious or unconscious, which have arisen from experience, intimate, social and traditional, and which are expressed in a person’s actions.” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2003: 147/8).

According to Vieira (2008: 201), some consensus seems to exist regarding the value of personal theory building, critical reflection, inquiry, self-regulation, dialogue, negotiation, cooperation, choice and self-direction as conditions for teacher development within teacher education programmes that seek to empower teachers to become agents of personal and social transformation. I believe that collaborative journals play an important role in uncovering the teacher’s personal practical knowledge, as well as paving a way to social transformation. As teachers are required to describe, interpret, and confront their pedagogical action in cooperation with

significant others (peers and academic authors), drawing on educational situations and dilemmas taken from their own professional contexts, they become active agents in the reconstruction of their professional action (cf. Smyth, 1989) in an emancipatory and autonomous way.

The on-going reflection sustained by collaborative journals fosters teachers' self-direction and professional emancipation, as they watch their pedagogical theories and choices being scrutinized and validated by their peers. Furthermore, because it is a dialogic process, the collaborative journal allows the participants to deepen their understanding of vicarious experience and of the process of knowledge production in professional contexts, for it involves writing about feelings and emotions, as well as about thoughts and actions (Moreira & Ribeiro, forthcoming).

This does not mean that tensions, contradictions and dissent do not arise; as Friedrich states (initial quote), allowing dissent to arise is crucial to the democratic society. As teachers and teacher educators we need to recover the place for the individual, for his/ her voice in the teacher and school curricula; we need to teach academic knowledge configured around faculty and student interests, addressed to pressing social (including community and global) concerns and implementing (auto)biography as a pedagogical political practice for the 21st century (Pinar, 2004). Using this author's words, (teachers') intelligence is made narrow, and thus undermined, when it is reduced to answers to other people's questions (op.cit.: 29). Teachers' collaborative journals gives voice to teachers' questions in teacher education programmes, articulating academic knowledge with personal practical knowledge. This process fosters critical reflection, as a worthy practice for implementing meaningful change: one that links political change, social change and transformational learning (Rau, 2004).

Analyzing teachers' collaborative journals: the issues of voice and power

Analytical devices

In order to illustrate the developmental value of these journals towards teacher (but also learner) autonomy I will selectively map the dimensions of the process of knowledge construction that arise from the readings of the collaborative journals of 10 experienced teachers.

The experience with these journals has arisen from the perceived need to improve teacher education practices in a post-graduate context of professional development, by making visible the process of knowledge-construction in evaluation in pedagogical supervision. My aim was to articulate reflective teacher development strategies with the development of learner autonomy, by studying teachers' personal practical knowledge, as it emerges from the written analysis of practice and the way it is related to readings and theoretical underpinnings of the course I taught. I will focus on the issue of **voice and power**, of teachers' and learners' voice in the classroom and in the schools and the distribution of pedagogical and professional power, as a pre-condition for the development of professionalism, autonomy... and democracy in schools.

As Poduska (1996), I also believe that democratic teaching involves three components: discovering and nurturing voice, developing consciousness, and claiming a new awareness. According to my experience, collaborative journals favour listening to different voices: those from the readings, voices from the learners, from peers, from other teachers in teacher development contexts... and the writers' own voices as agents of self-empowerment (Moreira & Ribeiro, forthcoming). In addition, teachers' writings are privileged sites for the analysis of power relations as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in

the form of a chain, making itself visible as relational *processes that are negotiated via strategies of resistance* (Foucault 1980: 98, in Rau, 2004), either from the part of students or from teachers themselves. From this perspective, teachers (and students) do not always reproduce discourses and their underlying values and assumptions. Through their strategies of resistance, teachers also adapt or contest discursive rules, like the ones coming from the Ministry of Education, or from their peers, for example.

The theme of voice has arisen from a preliminary approach to the data, as a recurrent theme in the several teachers' journals, partly due to the suggested readings in the course that included Apple & Beane (2000), hooks (1994), Shor (1992), Poduska (1996), and Dewey (2005), for instance. In this way, I was hoping that academic knowledge would be integrated with experiential knowledge. This approach would create space for knowledge construction based on an epistemology of practice and on the principles of empowering education (Shor, 1992) and engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994).

The context for the experience

The experience was developed in post-graduate teacher education, in the school years of 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08. I was the teacher of a course on Evaluation in Pedagogical Supervision in Foreign Language Teaching, in a Master's Programme on Pedagogical Supervision in Foreign Language Teaching. The students were a total of 38 white female foreign language teachers (English, French, German, and Spanish) that lived and worked in the North of Portugal. The majority had several years of teaching experience; a few had recently graduated as teachers. Some of them were also supervisors of student teachers in initial teacher education. There was also a male foreign language university teacher that came from East Timor and worked as a supervisor in pre-service language teacher education.

All wrote collaborative journals, with either weekly or bi-weekly entries that had to be commented by a person or persons of their choice. The content of these entries should be related to the content of the course: experiences, perceptions, reflections, ideas, readings... that they could relate to evaluation and assessment in schools and in teacher education. Even though their journals did not have to be commented by colleagues and teachers in the Master's programme, most of them chose to do so. I, as the teacher of the course, also had my journal that was commented by the teachers. I also made comments to the teachers' journals, as it proved to be an invaluable task within an empowering pedagogy of teacher education (cf. hooks, 1994: 21). At the end of the semester, each student should have from 7 to 14 commented entries in her/his journal. This task counted for about 30% of their final mark in the course, depending on the number of entries. However, they were not required to make their entries public or share them with the teacher. They only did that if they felt like it. The majority did.

The results of the analysis

At the beginning of the assignment, even though recognizing the importance of writing to keep a record of their learning path for the semester, the teachers find it somewhat hard to begin with, mostly due to the difficulty of finding the time to write, but also with keeping up with the motivation to do it in a continuous way. These constraints seem to be resilient ones in our writing contexts (see Moreira, Durães & Silva, 2006; Moreira & Ribeiro, forthcoming).

Notwithstanding, these obstacles were quickly overcome, as teachers started making individual entries to their journals. They rapidly recognize the need to carefully scrutinize their

practice, listen more often to their students, create the room for negotiation and self-direction, be more willing to make changes in their action, and be changed in the process⁵⁷.

Looking at my practice, I dare not say that I always negotiate with my students, even though I try to do it whenever possible. This situation happens, not from my being opposed to it, but because it is often impossible to dialogue with students about the ways they will be assessed, for assessment criteria are established by school departments. But I ask: it is right not to consider students' opinions about a subject so important for their schooling? Shouldn't students have a voice in this process? Don't we all work towards the same goal? (...) What is the teacher afraid of when s/he does not consider his/ her student's opinion? (...) In my opinion, the pedagogical relationship among teachers and students should be based on democratic principles, that will allow for debate, sharing perspectives, and establishing consensus, leaving no place for neither arrogance nor authoritarianism. In the end, we will all win. (EM, 04.18.07)

Today I felt that my students looked at self-assessment in a constructive way. Most of them are used to be questioned by the teacher about their grade and that's it. It seems as if this process is merely an obligation and a need that all students have to comply with. I tried to explain that self-assessment is more than that. I tried to show that students are part of the assessment process. Their opinion is fundamental so that the whole process can be understood and validated and without which nothing makes any sense. In the beginning, their reaction was of bewilderment and skepticism. Then they realized their voice was a part of the English lesson and that pleased them (me) highly. (...)

I wonder ...

I do have to change so I can be changed ... I have to listen to my students more often. To give them the necessary space in the construction of the several learning processes and, who knows, slowly, very slowly, try that other teachers will start thinking about it too. Yes, thinking about it is already a good start... (AM, 03.11.08)

As they start receiving feedback from significant others, they start seeing their action clarified, defied, but also validated, as they work towards increased understanding of the organizational, pedagogical and ideological constraints that are placed upon their action as teachers on the road to personal and social transformation. They slowly start to realize that the teachers' work towards teacher and learner autonomy is not a technical one, a 'smooth' one; it is rather more like 'a bumpy ride where contradictions, uncertainty, and conflicts are obstacles to be expected and overcome' (Auerbach, 2007: 87); all too often it resembles 'guerilla warfare' (Moreira, 2007), as teachers find themselves engaged in struggles that upset the *status quo* when they choose to listen to their own and to their pupils' voices as well as reflecting on issues of power in the classroom.

Entry (CRc, 05.01.06)	Comment (EF)
<p>After I read Katie Poduska's text, I reflected and tried to connect her experiences with mine. The author states that 'democratic teaching involves a total commitment and an ever-demanding focus'. Am I capable of doing this for my students? (...)</p> <p>I have often believed that helping students meant providing the answers and thorough instructions to each task. This is what students expect teachers to do. I now see that I wasn't helping them. (...)</p> <p>Students get used to 'receive' and do not seek, do not reflect, do not take chances. In other words, students become passive subjects, consumers, because everything is served at no effort.</p>	<p>.. [when you] ask students to design a self-assessment instrument does not that mean giving them a voice? Isn't it promoting their awareness on the teaching and learning process? Is it not a contribution towards finding their own 'direction'?</p>

⁵⁷ All testimonials in this text were translated from the Portuguese by the author.

Entry (CRc, 05.17.06)	Comment (PG)
<p>Dammed syllabus, allied to the dammed exams!! But sometimes I sense that they are scapegoats for keeping the 'status quo'. So that the teacher does not lose his/her 'beloved authority' (...)</p> <p>In my case, in spite of some underlying restlessness for some time now, only when I enrolled this post-graduate programme I managed to become a more reflective teacher with the necessary 'courage' and support to change! Because we often lack the engine to start us, to give us the courage to face the reality and to change! But this programme did not take away my uncertainties; on the contrary, it fed them a lot (...), but now I am used to them. I even see it is healthy to keep (and to feed) those uncertainties, for they are my engine forward, they encourage me to seek, not to stop and fall into conformity and stillness!</p>	<p>Sometimes, it is hard to resist the temptation of going with the tide (...) Everything becomes less utopian when we find others that are in the same situation and are willing to fight for what they believe in.</p> <p>Stillness is precisely what characterizes our teaching system. The solutions presented [by the Ministry of Education] aim at camouflaging adversity (...) When we cease to have doubts it means we have arrived at a point of unchanging stillness.</p>

Entry (CRb, 05.02.07)	Comments
<p>Why don't we ask students more often how they would like to be assessed? Obviously many will say that they rather wouldn't have tests; on the other hand, students recognize these moments as important, even for them. for they provide an opportunity for global self-assessment. (...)</p> <p>Why can't we negotiate the test with students? (...)</p> <p>Once I asked students about the theme in the test, so I could select a text in accordance with their opinion. Then I asked them about the type of reading and grammar exercises (...) The day of the test came. Students did it all. After the correction of the test, I asked them about the test structure. I asked them about the appropriateness of the exercises, whether they really tested their knowledge. I was taken by surprise when students asked me not to use a given type of grammar exercise. because everybody got it right. it was too easy, so it didn't test anything worthwhile, they said.</p> <p>What I intend to show is that one does not have to start a 'revolution' in one's pedagogical practice, so that we can involve students a little more in the self-regulation of learning.</p>	<p>#1(FA, 05.02.07)</p> <p>I try to give my students' voice in the classroom, but I am always quite limited by the obligation to abide to the department's assessment criteria. However, I systematically negotiate with my students the theme of the text, as well as the type of exercises, which is not easy. as some like one thing and the others like different things. Usually we reach an agreement. for some give in in any 'parameter' and others in other parameters.</p> <p>#2 (D, 05.02.07)</p> <p>Students should be given the opportunity, for example, at the beginning of the school year, to choose the way they want to be assessed (...)</p> <p>Keep being as you are, for if there is anyone who tries to innovate, to motivate, that person is you! I have never met a teaching professional as worried about their students as you are!!</p> <p>It is gratifying to know anyone who cares about the present teaching condition, but above all, who tries to do something to make it better!!</p> <p>Keep on, for we need people like you! ☺</p>

Entry (AM, 04.13.08)	Comment (Maria Alfredo, 04.13.08)
<p>Last lesson made me curious about bell hooks' text. (...) The issues of racism and discrimination, in combination with feminism always interested me. I read the text. Immediately I associated the first lines to Maya Angelou. I recalled the short story "Names", that willingly I made my students acquainted with when I was a teacher in the secondary school (...)</p> <p>The way hooks challenges the <i>status quo</i> reminds me of those students who often defy the teacher and thus are punished. When they question the teacher, the teaching and learning process, the assessment... And then they are discriminated against, rejected, failed. They also 'try to find their way home'. All too often, when they do not reproduce the teacher's discourse they are labeled "outsiders". Yes, 'one cannot/ should not lose track'.</p> <p>I remember a class, a few years ago, that questioned (almost) everything I said or done. Back then, that bothered me. (...) Why is it that in English adjectives come before nouns? Why do we have two tests this period? Why isn't group work done more often? Why, why, why...? Now I see that situation with a different look. Better still, I question my vision. Were not my students imagining 'possible futures' (hooks, 1992)? Different from those that, in some way, made me blind and prevented me from seeing them (both the students and the future)?</p> <p>Back then, for me, these students were 'outsiders' because they kept astride my values, beliefs, and educational practice. Now, looking back, I question my theory, my action, and my attitude towards what is 'different', what is 'strange'. I wonder, was I suffocating my students that much, not giving them space to think/ act freely? Paulo Freire says that to teach is not to transfer knowledge, but to create the possibilities for its production or construction. So, I consider that, over the years, I have almost solely transferred knowledge. And I am worried about that. It makes me wonder...</p> <p>Another issue I was drawn to, when reading hooks, was the sentence "I saw our words as an action". I also want to see my words as action. And I am slowly, very slowly, changing my action, based on reflection, and reflecting through my action. Now I want to (re)formulate theory based upon my experience. I want to change, to be changed and (who knows?) to change others... Am I being too greedy?</p>	<p>Her text doesn't seem as 'easy' as the other three I suggested. This is because it moves away from traditional academic discourses, placing the emphasis on naming lived experience and on its conceptualization in more familiar terms, in a language easily understood by broader audiences. The emphasis is placed in an emotional ethos, of feeling and talking about vicarious experience as it is <i>felt</i>, not thought of. (...)</p> <p>Western reason in discourse is too embedded of cognitive rationality that rejects, as inferior, discourse forms based on emotion and feeling, impression and sensitivity, bodily and artistic expression that are, to a great extent, the preferred forms of expression for children. These, like artists, start by questioning everything, by searching for forms of expression that are responsive to their immediate needs; however, they quickly realize that, in the world of adults, these forms are rejected; the world of the adults is all-knowing, privileges verbal discourse, logical and instrumental reasoning; children learn, too soon, that the world is tailored to the OTHERS, not to them... what is left for them is to grow up and learn to become the OTHER. Maybe that is why the school is, all too often, gray and sad; knowledge is an external entity, too far to be reached, or to be reached for only a few... (...)</p> <p>Seldom are the OTHERS women, ethnic minorities, disabled people, poor people... other children... that often conjugate all these traits in a single body...</p>

Reference #105

Facing discrepancies inside the team

Brenda Yim-man Lo yintang@edb.gov.hk, Education Bureau, HKSAR

The first presentation, 'Facing discrepancies inside the team', describes and reflects about the critical incidents faced by the school-based support team in the context of the educational change in HK over the past 10 years. The discrepancies as evident in the triangulation of the data gathered from the different sources provided the impetus for critical inquiry and collective reflection inside the team. The increasing awareness of the 'self' and 'power' in mediating the support process and the unique but complex classroom situation alerted the support agents to reflect on the widening of space that facilitates an open and critical inquiry among the teachers on the data gathered in the students' learning process. Attempts were made in different schools to experiment new ways of gathering data about students' learning experience and outcomes and how teachers analyze and interpret such data to improve their pedagogical practices.

Reference #106

Students' work can tell more than a 'tick'

Judy Wing-ki Kwok jk_hk@hotmail.com, Education Bureau, HKSAR

In the second presentation, 'Students' work can tell more than a 'tick'', the support agent would describe and reflect on her experience in supporting English learning in a disadvantaged district. To cope with the new English curriculum and the Territory-wide Student Assessment (TSA) set up in 2003, teachers have to change from the emphasis on the use of strongly 'guided' writing to the facilitation of 'free' writing. Some teachers had great reservation about this change and believed that it was impossible for their students to take up such writing task. Through studying and analyzing the individual students' work and referencing the analysis with the aggregate data obtained at the beginning of the term together with the teachers, substantial professional dialogue was generated. The open inquiry enabled the teachers to discern rich data and information embedded in the students' work which helped to improve their classroom teaching and learning and their expectations on the students.

Reference #107

Zooming in and out

Edmund Wei-che Chau wccchau@edb.gov.hk, Education Bureau, HKSAR

Based on the experiences in three case scenarios, the third presentation, 'Zooming in and out', describes how the video-camera was used as a tool to support teachers in gathering classroom data and reflecting on their own classroom practices. Video clips of the students'

learning process in the classroom and the teachers' analysis and interpretation of such process in the collaborative lesson would be used to depict the new support process in school. While the objectives and ways of using video-camera to gather classroom data different among the teachers in different schools, the positive impact of the classroom video was evident in the teachers' deeper understanding of their students' learning process and their increasing competence and confidence to make professional decisions and judgment based on the information obtained in the practical context.

Reference #108

Limited space, unlimited reflection

Angel Ha-ping Siu hpsiu@edb.gov.hk, Education Bureau, HKSAR

To facilitate a culture of systematic inquiry, discussion and reflection of a group of teachers on the teaching of 'fraction' in Mathematics, the support agent has carried out a small-scale experiment premised on the concept of 'lesson study' in the same school in 2003 and 2005. The data gathered in the cycle of plan-act-observe-reflect was described and analyzed. In the fourth presentation, 'Limited space, unlimited reflection', the change of the teachers, especially in terms of their self-reflectivity and sensitivity to their students' learning, over the two years was tracked. The open and self-critical reflection of the teachers did not only widen their space of thinking and acting. The experience of the experiment stimulated the support agents to reflect on the role and relationship with teachers.

